

Simulation Experiences and Preventing Faculty Burnout



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Let's face it, simulation days can be grueling! There are so many moving pieces – scheduling, providing consistency, moving people in and moving people out, dealing with student complaints, dealing with technical issues that may occur, spending long days on your feet, etc. So what can be done to help prevent faculty burn-out related to simulation experiences? **Here are a few ideas.**



- 1 Debrief the faculty.** Faculty should get together following simulation activities so they can debrief themselves. They should talk about what went well, what didn't go so well, and how they handled each situation. They should talk about how well the students were engaged, and ways in which the experience could be improved next time. Faculty should also discuss their feelings: excitement, confidence, anxiety, frustration, lack of confidence, tiredness, etc. **This is probably the most important activity to help keep faculty motivated** because it connects the faculty and allows them to realize they are not alone in these endeavors.
- 2 Keep it simple.** Make the preparation and tear-down of simulation activities as easy as possible. Keep all supplies used in labeled crates. Include an inventory sheet and ask people to re-stock the crate before putting it away. Have a crate for generic supplies. For example, it might have wigs, nail polish, female socks, male socks, female gown, male gown or other things that are often used to set up the scenarios.
- 3 Hire worker bees.** If possible, hire students to help with clean-up and set-up before simulation days. Many labs have found this to be very helpful and saves the faculty unnecessary time and effort. Of course, it is ideal to have a lab coordinator or simulation coordinator, but not all schools can afford to have a person dedicated to the lab.
- 4 Use graduate nurse educator students.** Another idea is to have graduate nurse educator students help with simulation days. They can be responsible for helping with the set-up and clean-up, but they can also help with running the scenarios and debriefing following the scenarios.
- 5 Create a positive environment.** Put pictures of students involved in simulation scenarios in the hallways outside the simulation lab. It is especially nice when students talk about how simulation helped them in a clinical situation or to pass a standardized exam! Greet the students with a smile and help them to feel supported. This will help both you and the students. Students will love the fact that they are in a safe environment and they do not have to fear retribution for the errors they might make. Make sure the debriefing session is very positive and helps students to reflect.
- 6 Share the good news.** Share positive, simulation-related quotes from students. Discuss good simulation outcomes during a faculty meeting or put a note in the campus newsletter. Talk about positive outcomes of the simulation experiences.
- 7 Start a tradition.** At the end of several days of simulation activities, have a pizza party for the faculty who have taken part or go to a restaurant together. Celebrate completion!
- 8 Provide mentors for new faculty.** Mentors should be faculty with experience who love the simulation environment and are willing to share their passion with new faculty. It is a good idea to provide the mentor with a list of things that will help the new faculty to learn. This list might include: setting up the simulation exercise, running the simulator, debriefing, teachable moments, cleaning up following the simulation, how to assign students, and many other topics.
- 9 Be flexible.** Know that things don't always go as planned. You should always have a plan B that is ready to go. Know what you will do when the simulated patient just doesn't work. Are you prepared to deliver the activity without the pulses, heart sounds, breath sounds, etc.? Are you ready to explain the state of the patient instead of having the student discover things? Are you prepared to ask questions to move the simulation exercise forward in case the students are completely lost?
- 10 Enjoy the experience!** Know that it will be tiring and may be frustrating at times, but, also know that you are helping to increase the clinical judgment of these students. They are going to recognize cues and will be ready to deal with some pretty difficult situations right at the bedside of patients! You should be excited about that – so sit back and enjoy the essence of teaching!



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